

19 June 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Legislative Council

SUBJECT: Comments on Congressional bills, H.R. 7149, H.R. 7475, H.R. 7486, H.R. 7489; to establish an Antarctic Commission.

1. Referring to subject bills now before the House Committee on Interior & Insular Affairs to establish a permanent Antarctic Commission as a central agency to formulate plans and execute the Government's activities in the Antarctic the following observations are presented:

a. Since the introduction of the proposed legislation more than two years ago, a number of changes have taken place that points to an improvement in the conduct of our Antarctic activities. The present set-up appears to be most workable, efficient and the simplest structure possible. This improvement in our opinion would obviate the need for an independent Antarctic Commission - at least for the present and immediate future. Rear Admiral David Tyree, in charge of the Antarctic operations, is doing a tremendous job in carrying out the Navy's responsibilities to provide the logistic support of our Antarctic stations. Equally proficient is the National Science Foundation under Dr. Alan Waterman in planning the scientific programs.

b. The executive departments involved at present are mainly:  
(i) the National Science Foundation, working in close concert with the Committee on Polar Research and various U.S. government departments. The Foundation has the basic responsibility for the U.S. scientific program preparation and for centralizing scientific data and research.  
(ii) The Department of Defense centralizes all operations for the logistic support; that being cargo-shipping and icebreaker operations as well as the air-support essential for maintaining the inland stations in the interior of the Antarctic continent.  
(iii) The Department of State has an Antarctic Staff responsible for international relations concerning Antarctica within the framework of the government's responsibilities for foreign relations.

2. There only seem to be two possible problems with the present organizational structure. However, it would not necessarily require an Antarctic Commission set-up to solve them. These are budgeting and the use of the military:

a. Logistic costs now come from the Department of Defense funds. This would seem to divert money from funds basically granted by Congress for Defense operations. Thus, at times one or the other would suffer in the difficult decision of deciding how much money should be taken from missile development or ships, for example, into Antarctic support cost.

b. The continued dependence on military support facilities and men is contrary to the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty, even though

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provisions are made to except military personnel and facilities for peaceful purposes. [REDACTED]

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3. Since the Soviet Union conducts its operations, at least ostensibly by the civilian Ministry of Marine Fleet (the Chief Directorate of the North-Sea-Route Administration), the assignment of basic responsibility of our Antarctic activities by our Department of Defense would lead to much world-wide misunderstanding that United States motives are military, and would provide excellent, even though misconstrued grounds for Soviet propaganda attacks against the United States. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the organization and conduct of Soviet Antarctic operations is divided between the Ministry of the Marine Fleet for Operations, and their Academy of Science for program preparation. Within their Academy of Science there is an inter-departemental commission which coordinates the programming of 100 different organizations within the Academy and in their government departments.

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J. C. KING  
Chief, WHD ( )

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1	Asst. Legislative Council, 220 East				19 June 61
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3	<i>Richard Gammis</i>		<i>GR</i>		<i>Full file</i>
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